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WATCH FOR THE GRADES WHEN YOU BUY MEAT

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A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Mr. Marvin Sandstrom, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, January 9, 1941, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 87 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington and to lead off for the Department of Agriculture, we have Ruth Van Deman, of the Bureau of Home Economics, and Marvin Sandstrom, of the Agricultural Marketing Service.

Ruth, it's generally Tuesday that brings you up here with us. We're glad this is a very special week with two Tuesdays.

MARVIN SANDSTROM:

Wallace, Ruth's the guest of the Agricultural Marketing Service this time. We're returning the courtesy that she's so often shown Mike Rowell and some of the rest of us in AMS. We're asking her to share our time as she's asked us to share hers on Tuesdays.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

I always make you work your way, Sandy, with the market news you bring.

SANDSTROM:

And we're asking you to be a working guest too, Ruth. We want your home economics slant on our Federal meat grades.

VAN DEMAN:

The grades that tell a woman what quality of meat she's buying?

SANDSTROM:

That's right----the U. S. quality grades on beef, lamb, and veal.

VAN DEMAN:

I find these grades very helpful when I go to the store to buy meat.

I like to know the quality I'm buying and pay accordingly. I always look for the U. S. meat grade stamp. But I don't always find it. Sometimes the butcher tries to tell me the little round purple stamp "U. S. Inspected and Passed" means quality.

SANDSTROM:

Oh, no. That's something else again. That round stamp means that the meat has been inspected and passed as wholesome food.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I know. The Bureau of Animal Industry has charge of that inspection work. It's a protection to the consumer too, but I realize it doesn't have anything to do with the eating quality of the meat.

(over)

SANDSTROM:

Our meat grading takes place after inspection. It starts in the wholesale market. Any packing plant or other meat distributor can arrange to have this service---by paying a fee that covers the work of the meat graders trained in judging quality.

Last year some 650 million pounds of meat were graded and stamped with these United States quality marks.

VAN DEMAN:

More of that was beef, I suppose than any other kind.

SANDSTROM:

Yes, there's much more difference in the quality of beef than in other kinds of meat.

VAN DEMAN:

True. There's baby beef and I have sometimes got hold of a piece that cut like grandfather beef.

SANDSTROM:

Yes, we all have, especially when the meat wasn't graded by a uniform standard of quality. And besides differences in the age, there are the differences in fatness and other characteristics of a carcass---that have a great deal to do with the eating quality of beef.

VAN DEMAN:

On a steak or a roast, I like a thick rim of fat. And I try to pick one with little streaks of fat scattered through the lean.

SANDSTROM:

Well marbled--the meat graders would call it. And did you say, Ruth, with a thick rim of creamy white fat?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, fat with a white or cream color. Meat experts tell me that's a mark of high-grade beef.

SANDSTROM:

Sure it is. You're describing what our graders would class U. S. Choice---the highest grade beef sold regularly in the retail trade. The grade above that "U. S. Prime" is very limited in supply. The fancy hotel and club trade snaps up what there is of it.

VAN DEMAN:

Probably diners-at-home wouldn't be willing to pay the extra price for it anyway.

SANDSTROM:

Not many family budgets could stretch that far.

It costs money to put fat on beef cattle. And when a cattle man puts a super-abundance of fat on his stock, naturally the price goes up.

But looking at the grading scale in the other direction, the next notch below Choice is U. S. Good ----- which is just what the name implies---good, good enough for most of us.

VAN DEMAN:

Right you are, Sandy. I didn't mean a moment ago, to sound as though I would buy only choice beef.

SANDSTROM:

I understood. You were talking about the grand thick steak or big juicy roast, for a special occasion.

VAN DEMAN:

Exactly. Most of the time I buy beef marked U. S. Good. It's fat enough to cook well and reasonable in price.

SANDSTROM:

That's where a large proportion of beef sales fall---in the good grade that is, in places where beef is sold in greatest volume.

Below, the U. S. Good come four other grades on the Federal scale----Commercial, Utility, Cutter, and Canner. The last two - Cutter and Canner - are seldom found in retail markets.

But, Ruth, don't you home economics people believe that meat is best cooked according to grade---as well as bought by grade.

VAN DEMAN:

That's the way to have the best meat to eat.

And of course when it comes down to food value, beef is beef-----whether it's a high-priced porterhouse steak broiled in a jiffy, or whether it's a moderate-priced slice of chuck cooked slowly with lots of rich brown gravy as a Swiss steak.

SANDSTROM:

You mean you get just as much nourishment out of one as the other.

VAN DEMAN:

So far as the nutrition specialists know now. Far be it from me to say whether some day they'll find a vitamin or some precious food element in the fore-quarter and another in the hindquarter.

SANDSTROM:

But for the present it's a question of taste, and pocketbook.

VAN DEMAN:

And good cooking.

SANDSTROM:

On the good cooking side, the Sandstrom family finds that bulletin of yours "Meat Dishes at Low Cost" a great help. Everything we cook by that seems to taste good.

VAN DEMAN:

Fine. I'll pass that word along to the experimental cooks in our food labs. -----the women who worked out these recipes.

In all these low-cost recipes that call for beef, the cheaper cuts from higher grade meats, or any cuts from the lower grades, are the most practical to use.

SANDSTROM:

I'd call that a double-action cooking job--cooking according to the cut and cooking according to the grade.

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly that's what smart meal planners do all the time. Sorry I didn't come prepared this time with a pan full of braised short ribs of beef to demonstrate...

KADDERLY:

Thank you, Ruth. If you don't mind I'll have Swiss steak with onions.

VAN DEMAN:

Would the printed recipe appease you for the moment, Wallace?

KADDERLY:

Not really---but if it's all I can get-----

VAN DEMAN:

Sorry but it is right now. Here's a checked and double-checked recipe for Swiss steak in "Meat Dishes at Low Cost"----along with 59 other savory ways to dress up the cheaper cuts. Sandy's already said they're home-tested in the Sandstrom kitchen.

SANDSTROM:

They surely are. And, Wallace, if your going to offer that home economics bulletin to our Farm and Home listeners, may I suggest this one from the Agricultural Marketing Service, "Buying Beef by Grade", as a good companion?

KADDERLY:

Yes, I'd say the two fit together just like -----

VAN DEMAN:

I know what you're going to say Wallace--Swiss steak and onions.

KADDERLY:

You beat me to it Ruth.

Very well, Farm and Home friends, (ad lib offer of Meat Dishes at Low Cost -----Buying Beef by Grade). Send all requests to Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.